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Patna Centre

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A Study of a Slum in Patna

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Fringe Lives: A Study of a Slum in Patna*

RAHUL JAMBHULKAR[1]

Urbanisation is considered to be a sign of economic development of a particular country. The economic theorists argue that the higher the urbanization, the higher is the socio-economic development of the urbanized region. This theory seems to be appropriate in the case of metropolitan cities like Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore and Kolkata. One side of these cities is glittery with an abundance of opportunities with increased economic growth while the other side is dark with a sizeable amount of the population living in squatters and as homeless groups. Marginalized groups migrate from depressed rural areas to the urban settlements to ameliorate their socio-economic condition; however, they get trapped in the precarious urban gaze, indiscriminating and exploitative informal economy and their lives are centered around illegality which makes them doublly marginalized; rather "improper citizens." [2] This is a study of such marginalized groups whose life is incomparable with the general urban poor in many aspects, right from their physical appearance to their existence. Their being in the urban space is not only unpleasant and problematic for the state and the civil society, but also for the people from the other marginalized groups. The effort here is to understand the different aspects of the fringe lives by studying a slum in Patna.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To conceptualise 'fringe lives' through studying a slum in Patna, Bihar.
2. To understand the fringed lives as socio-political subject.
3. To study the different aspects of fringe life.

METHODS

This is the study of fringed lives living in a slum in Patna city. This working paper is the result of field work of over one month of which the initial days were spent on building rapport with the members of the community. Unstructured interviews of eight male respondents and two female respondents

1Rahul Jambhulkar worked with the TISS Patna Centre as Research Officer from March 2017 to May 2017. The present paper was presented in a symposium in February 2017 at Patna. The author is thankful to Ms. Sheema Fatima and Prof. Manish Jha for their insightful comments on the first draft of the paper.

*This paper is a long proposal for a future study of "fringe lives" in the slums of Patna.

2 See, (Chatterjee, 2004)

were conducted. However, many informal interactions with passers-by and the members of civil society helped understand the field. A diary was maintained to note the responses of the respondents, although their responses were not written while conducting the interview but later during breaks. Apart from interviews, observation was also used as a method for the study.

PROBLEMATISING THE FRINGE

The concept of 'fringe' has frequently been used in the geographical studies, but in recent times this has been brought into other social science disciplines. Oxford English dictionary defines 'fringe' as "the outer edge of an area or a group", or "groups of people, events and activities that are not part of the main group or activity". The definition consists of two important elements, namely, location and people. However, studies on the fringe, mostly carried out in the western context laid the greater emphasis on the former in order to define the word and differentiate it with other often confused concept like suburbs. The fringe is located beyond the legal boundary of city surrounded by the farm land (Martine 1953; Firey 1946). Mixed rural and urban land use patterns with the migrant residents makes the rural-urban fringe distinct from other residential areas (*ibid*.; Kimball 1949). Few more categories like growth, density and government structure also forms a substantial part in conceptualisation of the term fringe (Kurtz and Eicher 1958).

In India due to the lower level of urbanisation, the distinction between rural and urban was thought to be not meaningful by the sociologists and traditional city and village were considered to be the elements of the same civilisation owing to which the urbanisation remained the neglected subject (Rao 1974). When the research minds were not captivated to the changing urban landscape in India then to find sufficient literature specifically on fringe is transitory. However, few significant studies of the village near a town, city or metropolis in India reveal changes in their socio-economic structure, which proximate to some of the characteristics of the fringe society. Srinivas (1956) found in his study of Rampura Village the change during Second World War bringing prosperity in the village – Modern technology was introduced, cash was invested nearby towns, increased contact with the city and higher education brought the positive change in the lives of Brahmins in the village. He sums up that the urbanisation in South India has a caste component. Due to the Brahmins strategic role in the caste system, they, in rural areas constituted the religious and land aristocracy and in urban areas they had monopoly over all the higher posts.

Kapadia (1956) observes the change in the rural family patterns in the wake of increasing industrialisation and urbanisation in nearby villages of

Navsari town in the erstwhile Bombay presidency (modern Gujarat state). The change in the family pattern was visible in terms of weakening of joint family and increasing number of nuclear families of middle and upper caste groups. Acharya (1956) finds that the areas around Nasik city are being slowly absorbed in Nasik itself. The expansion of the city is credited to it being the place of pilgrimage which led traders and artisans to settle in the city. The four villages which she studied were observed to be engulfed into the city and the people went to the mainland city looking for employment, market, and money which makes the village merely a food production centre.

'Fringe society' represents, at a structural level in the rural-urban (half way peasant and half way urban) society a continuum manifested by the characteristics of a peasant society escalated in new types (Rao 2007). These 'new types' are nothing but the 'urban fringe'. Urbanisation gained momentum during 1980s and 90s; landscape of major cities in India changed; instability and agriculture crises pushed people to migrate from rural to urban areas which made cities populous and dense and adjacent rural-urban fringe got subsumed into the city space making it first, a periphery and then mainland of the city. As the city boundary expanded, municipal authorities were compelled to extend the municipal area incorporating many fringe localities, making it the urban fringe. Although situated in the city space, these urban fringes are neglected and isolated in more than one ways. Cities being the centre for all major economic activities and consumerism, many service sector units and production units need to be within the boundary of the city resulting in the increasing demand of land due to the present neo- liberal markets to attract revenue. This expansion of the urban areas takes place at the cost of fringe indiscriminate and violent demolition or displacement to push a real estate agenda through privatisation for profit maximisation (Das 2003). Even the rehabilitation policies aiming at the modification of the poorest localities to ameliorate living condition are exclusionary in nature. It instead benefits the builders and construction companies alienating and destabilising people from their right to housing (*ibid.*). Some fringes are sustained due to the resident's homogeneity, their political connections and how long they have been established (Jha et al. 2007). In many cases, neither of the mentioned reasons help fringes sustain themselves in new locations, even if they are old enough to be regularised under different rehabilitation programmes.

Old categories based on the above studies are insufficient to define the contemporary urban fringe. The existing categories are merely physical or geographical which do not dwell on the life of people who make the fringe a socio-political category. Due to the scarce theorisation of the fringe, it is difficult at this point in time to define the fringe lives. However, certain

characteristics can be found among the people living on the fringes. These are insecure livelihoods, under-served and stigmatised habitations, informal labour, restricted upward mobility, and life is grounded around illegalities. In addition to this, discriminating and isolated social relations, the body is hungry, exhausted, sick and poor in appearance and weak in capabilities due to the lack of education, skills and confidence (Narayan et al. 2000).

CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF PATNA

Patna being the largest city and capital of the Bihar state is an important administrative and educational centre. Its strategic location makes it accessible to the people across the state for education, health services and livelihood. The city has a very long river line surrounded on three sides by rivers – Ganga, Sone and Punpun. In addition to this, river Gandak flows into the river Ganga, making the city with beautiful natural landscape and high level of water table prospering the lives of large land-holders.

The landscape of the city is first reported to have changed in the late 18th century with the increasing dominance of the Britishers – they did not want to live in the old city which they thought was congested and unclean where chances of conflict with local people were greater – this contributed to the development of an area between the western part of the old town and Danapur along the river Ganga away from their army base at Danapur Cantonment (Bakshi & Chaturvedi 2007). Restructuring planning was done and a map of the existing city was prepared by Francis Buchanan, a visitor who arrived in 1811 on the order of the East India Company. It was observed by him that the city was sparsely populated from *Golghar* to Company *Bagh* with occasional bungalows of Europeans. *Mohalla Bakerganj* was shown in the map he prepared, but the lawn (existing Gandhi Maidan) was not shown in the same. Apart from Bakerganj, Muharrampur, Muradpur, Afazalpur and Mahendru already existed on the eastern side along the highway. He also mentioned Salempur, Langartoli, Quazipur, Bhikna Pahari and Musaliehpur. Lohanipur was the southern most habitation (c.f. Bakshi & Chaturvedi 2007 p. 4). Further, in 1824 new guidelines to restructure city was formalised under which the race course or the Gandhi Maidan in present day was established. The arrival of railway lines in the city and construction of highways connecting neighbouring district resulted in deft and smoothened trade and business. However, in order to protect the railway bridge connecting the south and north over Punpun river a bund was constructed which obstructed the expansion of city toward south. By 1857 Patna became the administrative centre for six adjacent districts increasing the administrative functions and bureaucracy (Bakshi & Chaturvedi 2007).

Patna towards the end of 18th century transformed into the urban area and expanded beyond the existing boundary of the city. New areas came into existence as a result of this expansion, e.g. *Nayatola* grew between Bikhna Pahari and Langartoli where eminent doctors, civil servants, lawyers, journalists and social workers had their residence (*ibid.*). Subsequently, the new areas were developed according to the professions. For instance, Muradpur and Chowhatta had the lawyers' residence; Machuatoli (existing Bari Path) due to the spiritual and religious needs of the different sections had some priest living in this area; Dariyapur Mohalla was established as home to the practicing doctors of Homeopathy, Allopathy and *Unani* medicine (*ibid.*). The prominence of the city of Patna increased as the new infrastructure was developing and as it was made the administrative headquarter of six districts. The *Jamindars* and *Maharajas*[3] were therefore compelled to visit Patna more frequently for various reasons. As a consequence, these *Jamindars* and *Maharajas* decided to acquire land and households within the city for their convenience.

The changing landscape of Patna especially post-independence period was further not captured significantly in the studies. Even if the literature exists, I have not come across with any apprehending the change. Much exploration is needed in this regard if one wants to understand the location, spread and growth of slums, most importantly the period in which the maximum number of slum settlement took place in the city of Patna. Not only this, attention was also given on the spatial structuring of the city space from mid-twentieth century towards an end of the same.

In recent times, especially in the 90's, the city boundary expanded to touch the neighbouring rural blocks of Patna district, namely, Danapur, Phulwari Sharif, Maner and Bihta. However, most areas of these blocks are now part of the Patna Municipal Corporation (PMC) and all of these including the city from the Patna Planning Area (PPA) constituting 28.74 lakh populations as per 2001 census under the city development plan by the Urban Development and Housing Department of the state (CEPT, 2014). The population of Patna Urban Conglomeration[4] was estimated 1.69 million in the Census 2001, which has grown to 2.04 million in 2011 census at a compound growth rate of 2.5 per cent per annum (Ibid). The expansion of the municipal boundary was attributed to the increasing number of population by both, the migration from

3 The Zamindar Tekari had his house in the city while The Maharaja of Darbhanga and Raja of Bettiah constructed giant palaces and Maharaja Mahipat Narayan Singh constructed a temple dedicated to the lord Shiva in his house (see, Bakshi and Chaturvedi, 2007: p.8)

4 Patna Urban Conglomeration includes area of Patna Municipal Corporation and four other census towns i.e. Phulwari Sharif, Danapur Nizamat, Danapur Cantonment and Khagaul.

across the state of Bihar as well as internal growth[5]. Patna emerged as the fastest growing trade and business centre in the state, consequently making it a preferred destination for the migrants from immediate hinterland as well as different parts of the state in the last one decade. The existing land use pattern of the PMC indicates that almost half of the land is used as the residence zone including authorised and unauthorised colonies out of total land available. The following table gives the detail land use pattern under PMC.

Land Use	Area (sq.km)	Percentage (%)
Residential	49.56	47.55
Commercial	4.65	4.46
Mix Use	3.52	3.37
Industrial	1.09	1.05
Public and Semi-Public	10.61	10.18
Open Space / Recreational	3.20	3.07
Transport / Roads	6.15	5.90
Airport	1.10	1.05
Brick Kiln	0.73	0.70
River / Flood Plain	3.49	3.35
Water Body	1.06	1.01
Vacant Land / Agriculture Land	18.40	17.66
Forest	0.67	0.64
Total PMC Area	104.22	100.00

Source: Master Plan for Patna – 2031, Prepared by Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology (CEPT) University for Urban Development and Housing Department, Patna Bihar. P.15

The recent concluded census data on the slum population reported around 0.25 per cent of the total Patna Urban Conglomeration living in the slums. However, the City Development Policy in 2006 (CDP) estimated that 63.5 per cent of the total Patna's population resides in the slum (as quoted by Jha, 2012). Further, the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIYA) carried out an independent study[6] listing out 99 slums under PMC which comprises of almost 15163 households, of which approximately 1439 were minority,

5 See, The Primary Census Abstract, Census 2011, Directorate of Census, India.

6 TThe problem of listing slum is that the locality or area is only identified as slum if it is fit into the definition given by the Bihar State Slum Policy which define slum as "A compact area of at least 20 'slum like households' of poorly built congested tenements, in unhygienic environment usually with inadequate infrastructure and lacking proper sanitation and drinking water facilities." There may exists the pockets in certain areas of the city where the household number is below the prescribe number.

9645 Scheduled Caste, 3781 Backward Castes and 298 General Category – this means near 64 percent of the slum population belong to the Scheduled Castes category (*ibid.*). Of the listed slums, 57 are located on the state government's non-tenable land, 12 on the PMC's land, while 22 are located on own/private land (Ibid).

"Urbanisation is very substantial in absolute terms , the rate of growth is low. Labor-intensive industrialisation, too, is slow and urbanisation seems to derive primarily from natural increase and poverty-driven migration from rural areas" (Nijman, 2012). Internal growth of the population in the city along with in-migration contributed in out spread of the city space engulfing many rural urban fringes. Patna is being projected as the competitive city by creating favourable conditions for trade and business along the lines of major metropolitan cities in India. The effort of the government is to increase the land use for the commercial purposes by demolishing the unauthorised slums and forcefully evacuating its residents to privatise this land to exploit the central location of these slums for profit maximization.[7] Today, developing Patna has dual characteristics, one, aspiring to create competitive infrastructure to nurture the trade and business, to beautify the city, to cater the need of middle class, upper middle class and the elites making it desirable, and the other the city of slums, undesirable.

LOCATING FIELD

The studied location has been renamed to *Samata Nagar*[8] which is situated in the southern limits of Patna City. *Samata Nagar* is one of the oldest rural-urban fringes transformed into an urban slum due to the expansion of both the city and the boundary of the municipal corporation. It is located on the main road connecting Patna with one of the important suburbs of the city. The homogeneity is determined by their caste locations, i.e. *Musahar. Musahars* are landless labourers living in extreme poverty and subhuman conditions for centuries. Some of them live as bonded labourers even till date. Only two families were found to be from the *Koeri* caste that holds agricultural land which has been put out on rent to the construction company for temporary labour camp and to set up machineries under the infrastructure development initiative by the state government. It is a small slum in terms of area but densely populated with about 2500 households, neglected and isolated, situated within the city boundary of Patna having poor public amenities thus, lacking popular features

7 See, draft of Bihar state slum policy by the Urban Development and Housing Department, Government of Bihar: http://urban.bih.nic.in/Docs/Draft-of-Bihar-State-Slum-Policy.pdf

8 *Samata* in English means equality, which is my utopia, envisioning the *Nagar,* an area or location to be based on the principle of egalitarianism.

of urban communities. There are few other localities in the neighbourhoods of Samata Nagar which were known as the same name roughly from 10 to 15 years back, but renaming of certain pockets was initiated by the respective residents. Out of many localities surrounded by *Samata Nagar, Darshan Nagar* has a mixed Scheduled Caste population in which *Musahar and Pasi* are the dominant. Apart from this, *Dusadh and Dom* are also residents of an area. These two locations are divided by the *nalla* and a parallel road. A flyover is under construction to the parallel road that will connect north Bihar to south Bihar. This highly ambitious project of the state government anticipated to first, save the time for commutation and second, to offer an alternative to the existing *Gandhi setu* (the only bridge connecting South with North Bihar) for trade, business and other purposes. Once the construction of the bridge is near completion, the expansion work of road beneath flyover will commence displacing hundreds of habitation. Construction work makes the existing road busy with mostly heavy vehicles with raw materials. Government or private buses do not ply to or via *Samata Nagar,* only autos are the main public transportation system, the frequency of which is low in comparison with other areas in the city.

The habitation is densely populated, situated along roadside on *aamgairmajurva* (public utility) land. Houses are unorganised and scattered with little or no passageway between houses. The walls of tiny houses are made of bricks, cement and sand without finishing, few of which are painted with limestone with pitch roofs of corrugated metal, polythene and any other material other than concrete. The walls of most houses are painted mainly on the occasions like *chhat*, *Diwali* or before wedding in the family. Each house is constructed more or less on 150 square feet with entrance porch partially shaded with extended roof sheet. An entrance roof is the most used area by the residents for various purposes right from cooking to dining and sleeping.

Samata Nagar is composed of rural migrants from adjacent districts of Patna like Nalanda, Bhojpur, Buxar, Jehanabad and Siwan. There are different factors leading them to migrate from rural areas to urban. Many have reported to have migrated in search of livelihood due to scarcity of livelihood options in their respective villages while reasons to migrate for many others being the increasing caste atrocities by the upper caste, bonded labour and natural calamities like flood, etc. The residents of a slum in the study, in terms of the occupation, forms substantial labour force for the city, some people's livelihood is based on what is called illegal occupations i.e. illicit liquor making, burglary and gambling.

Residence of *Samata Nagar*, due to their caste and occupational status leads the substandard life. By their physical appearance, they look fragile,

exhausted, tired and miserable, eyes look deadbeat, matted hair; dishevelled clothes; freckles, lined and blemished skin; unkempt body. This description of fringed lives is located near the pile of garbage, saturated and extremely contaminated water tank making their life hazardous and unhealthy. Busy semi- pucca road with heavy vehicles day and night makes their life more pathetic. Living conditions in the slum are poor, illicit liquor making and consumption can cause some serious health problems and contaminated still water and pile of garbage make their life even more vulnerable and hazardous.

UNDESIRED LIFE DESIRED LOCATION

The creation of Jharkhand left the state of Bihar with inadequate industrial establishment. Large amounts of industrial units in the state are located in the city of Patna a big part of which comes in the small and medium scale industries. There is no doubt about the role the city plays to catalyst with abundant opportunities for rural-urban migrants, but the nature of unregulated jobs in the informal sectors pushes them to fringes and make them precarious. Despite the low industrial production base and the only full grown urban centre in the state, rural folks often look upon Patna with great hope and expectation for livelihood, residents of *Samata Nagar* are no exception. They had come long back into the city in search of livelihood and settled on the periphery of the city. The picture of migrating to Patna from his village in Jehanabad district is blurry to Chandes Kumar,[9] an old resident of the slum who was 9 years old when his family first came to *Samata Nagar*, he recollects his experience;

> "I was a child when my family came here in Patna and chose to live in *Samata Nagar* because we had few people already settled here from our village. My father, after coming to Patna did some odd jobs as construction labourer, rikshaw puller and even rag picker. After some months he was informed by his friend that in the nearby railway godown, there are job opportunities as loaders. He immediately went to visit the contractor, after having passed the physical fitness test he was employed with piece rate. After a few years since he started working, I too joined him and started supplementing the family income. When we came, this area was quite an open space, surrounded by an agricultural land. The houses you see now were not the same, they were made of any piece of waste clothes or waste wood with hey roof. This is only during Laloo's regime our houses were built pucca by the government under Jawahar Awas Yojna (JAY). During the initial days of our settlement, we have had great difficulties. The local goons

9 All the names mentioned in the article have been changed to maintain the confidentiality of the respondents. The narrative was collected during my field work on October 19, 2016 at *Samata Nagar.*

violently tried to evacuate us despite the land was not belonging to them when we collectively retaliated they asked for money instead. We did not face any threat to evacuate from the state government then, it is only recently the state government conceived an idea of displacing us, failing thrice in the last 15 years, but the existence of our area for a longer time is highly unlikely since government has proposed the widening of roads and a flyover is already under construction".

Chandes Kumar could tell the period when he along with his family arrived to live in *Samata Nagar.* However, when asked about the exact period of forming a slum, he was unable to remember since the area already existed prior to his arrival. The existing body of literature suggests that any unauthorised colony's existence is based on the political linkages of community to the local political actors associated with electoral parties (Jha et al., 2007). In order to dwell into the question of existence of the studied slum an adequate time was required to be spent on the field. However, it is precisely because of the time constraint the proposed question went unaddressed. Prior to understanding the existence of a particular location, one needs to understand the formation of the same. The effort was taken to understand the formation by collecting oral history of the respondents claiming to be living in the *Samata Nagar* from past three generation. Rajesh Kumar, a middle aged man who must be in his late 60s while asked about the formation has following to say;

"I am born and brought up in Samata Nagar. I have not seen any changes in the structure of our area except the construction of our houses by the government recently. I do not know when we came here and settled. My father used to tell me during my childhood that his father means my grandfather had migrated from nearby village. He died when my father was young and my father died when I was too young. Most of the people are living here from past three to four generation and have been engaged in different economic activities".

Rajesh Kumar's narrative is striking, the second part of which captivates the attention to the life span of the residents. Inhuman living conditions, grinding poverty and substandard life makes them vulnerable and prey to deadly diseases like malnutrition, malaria and *kala-azar* reducing the life span of the people as a consequence a generation is diminishing rapidly. Old people in the slum are scarce to find, the area looks more youthful and nude and semi-nude children playing with wooden stick and stones roadside. By their physical appearance the residents look fragile, frail and exhausted, their locality is termed as grimy and filthy. No human being with a decent standard of living would neither want to enter into the *Samata Nagar* nor pass through

unless it is important. New areas, apartments, and gated colonies have developed around the *Samata Nagar,* where mostly people from the middle income group or upper income group reside. These areas have developed in recent past demolishing the already existing fringe locations. During the very first dayion the field when I was trying to locate the small pocket of *Samata Nagar,* I tried to find it with the help of local people who obstructed me entering into the same. The caution came as a warning to enter at my own risk as it was informed that the people in the *Samata Nagar* are violent and filthy. The Chinese food stall owner *Bablu* who was opening his stall at the entrance of the Samata Nagar cautiously told;

> *"Aap kahe jana chahte hai uha. Keval sharab pine wale log aibe karte hai Samata Nagar ka pata puchate hue. Musahar sharab pike ludake rehate hai aur ane-jane walo ko gali galouch bhi karte hai. Har roz uha mar hobe karta hai*[10]. (why do you want to go there. Only drunken people ask for Samata Nagar's address. *Musahars* are wallowed high on drink abusing passer byes. Every day some fight happens there.)

The social perception in the case of Samata Nagar has been constructed and reinforced on the basis of the occupation and traditional caste practices of *Musahar* community. However, the process of constructing these perceptions, and how it is reinforced by the civil society, need a detail investigation. The complexity of the case increases when the members of civil society on the one hand labeled and stigmatise the community while on the other they are dependent on the services of this group. Kishan Kumar,[11] an educated member of the community who is associated with a missionary organization, narrates his observation and experiences as an insider which helps us understand the complexity of the case, He asserts;

> "Due to our caste location and physical appearance, no one wants to give us employment opportunity. Our women would not be allowed to work as domestic help. They would like to walk on the road swept by us, they like to live in an area cleaned by us. They would not even drink water from us, but on the contrary, they like to drink liquor made by us".

Another incident will deepen our understanding the fringe life and civil society's strategy to uproot their existence. The graveyard for the residents

10 Based on informal interaction dated on October 15, 2016 at the entry point of *Samata Nagar.*

11 Based on the interview dated on November 14, 2016 at his office located in the heart of the city.

of the Samata Nagar is nearly one kilometer behind their habitation. Due to hyper-commodification of the land, real estate gained the momentum in the surrounding areas. As a consequence, posh colonies and gated communities came into existence. One such gated colony is located near the Musahar's graveyard. The graveyard is located on the *aamgairmajurva* land and the local municipal authorities had approved it as graveyards for the Samata Nagar residents. Influential residents of the gated colony, however, curbed the last ritual to be performed on the allotted land and restrained burying the dead body. They got success in their endeavours to put an official order for allotment of land on hold. The efforts made by the Samata Nagar residents to regain the access of land by approaching a local corporator which went in vain.

"The neo- liberal envisioning of cities and the accompanying hyper-commodification of land and new forms of social marginalisation have increased precarity among migrant labour, severely impairing their ability to negotiate the city space and society at large", (Samaddar 2016) making the life of slum residents undesirable while the location on which they reside desirable.

NEGLECTED AND ISOLATED FRINGE LIVES

"Dominant development theories assume that slums are a transitory phenomenon characteristic of fast growing economies; and during the later stages of economic growth, slums progressively give way to formal housing with the trickling down of the benefits" (as quoted by Marx et al. 2013). According to these theories, residence in slums are temporary in the life cycle of rural migrants who latter move into formal housing within the city, with the benefits of migration (*ibid.*). These theories have been contested through various empirical studies on slum life. The residence of Samata Nagar having existed more than three generations in dilapidated houses could not move an inch into the formal housing towards the city. It is the area of the lowest status, more often stigmatised and labelled. The congested and unfavourable living conditions at home and in neighbourhood, grinding poverty, low socio-economic status and physical deterioration are some of the characteristics of the *Samata Nagar.* All of this along with traditional caste based practices of the community induce the crime among the residents. The area is often neglected rather socially isolated by not only the government, but also by the members of the civil society. There is a minimum level of socio-economic and political interaction of civil society with the residence of *Samata Nagar*. However, much exploration is required to investigate the aspects of socio-economic and political lives in which former interact with the latter.

Elected representatives do not even pay heed to the demands of basic

public amenities for the residence. The semi-pucca approach road has not been repaired since ages, only three hand pumps are available for nearly 2500 households, despite the houses were constructed by the government under the Rajeev Awas Yojna they are either poorly maintained or broken, low level of education – neglect on the supply side, deteriorating health conditions, life expectancy, all of this show show the life in the slum has pushed to the fringes is often neglected, socially isolated and under-served. The basic minimum services to the slum have become woefully inadequate and reached to a critical stage threatening the civilised existence of the residence of *Samata Nagar,* "perpetually suffering from the condition of suspended citizenship" (Jha and Kumar 2016).

The marginalised social groups like SCs, Muslims and other communities have numerical strength in the city of Patna but they do not necessarily occupy the centre stage of politics. "Notwithstanding the possibilities of mobilisation, the structure of urban politics is such that Muslims, Dalits, as well as the slum dwellers find themselves politically powerless and marginalised – this, not only due to strategic disadvantages faced by these groups but also of the implicitly unequal and exclusionary character of politics in the urban environ" (Vora and Palshikar 2003).

ILLEGAL ASPECT OF FRINGE LIVES

As it is already mentioned in one of the section above that the *Samata Nagar* is located on the public utility land belonging to the state government. Sustenance of the illegal settlements have to be negotiated with the political actors of the state without which the existence of such location may be evacuated indiscriminately and violently. Existence of such settlements, if not promoted is rather ignored by the populist government. It is during the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) government led by the Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav consolidation for the encroachment of public utility land had taken place for both, human as well as the cattle settlement. It is the political patronage and bureaucratic apathy which encouraged encroachment to thrive. However, these new human settlements were never legalised or regularised nor even the legislation was enacted to authorised at least an old illegal settlements. As consequences of this, the existence of such settlements remained illegal till date.

An illegal aspect of the fringe lives in the slum is associated with economic activities the slum dwellers of *Samata Nagar* are involved in. They are producing illicit liquor for generations now. Before imposing the liquor ban by the state government only few families were involved in this occupation due to legal access to it at various licensed liquor shops reducing the demand

of liquor made by *Musahar's* at *Samata Nagar.* The demand for the liquor during then used to come from the labour class populations from adjoining areas. Since the ban was imposed, the demand for liquor is generated from across many sections of the city. As a result, many households are attracted to foray into liquor production. The demand for the liquor has multiplied; it first came from the already fixed customers from neighbourhood and nearby areas, second, from the labour camps at the construction site and finally, from the civil society members earning them surplus amount for living. It is the responsibility of men in the family to produce the liquor while women selling it to the customers. Children also help their parents in the liquor making; they often used as home delivery agents on demand. This social group living on the fringes are systemically marginalised, criminalised and pushed into vicious and accelerating cycles of violence and poverty.

"The life of poor living in the slum is often grounded in violation of the law which is made consistent with the pursuit of equal citizenship and civic virtue" (Chatterjee 2004), in the case of *Samata Nagar* right from their settlements to the occupations they are engaged. Sustaining life by violating the law without the act of negotiation and mediation is strenuous, rather unfeasible. "Who does mediate?" (*ibid.*) or negotiate is a matter of investigation.

CONCLUDING QUESTIONS

Understanding the formation of a slum would enable us to explore the circumstances and situation of the families who arrived in Patna and set up the unauthorised colony. Initial struggle and conflict with the local dominant groups often resulted in the violence. This forms an important aspect of the life in slum, which has been used as the strategy to survive. The proposed research will also list out different socio-political support systems that supported the community to form their habitation.

Notwithstanding the slum successfully formed, the grave challenge is to sustain it amidst several threats. The persistent threat of forceful evacuation by the state, local dominant groups, land mafias and police surveillance to keep watch on their economic activities makes them vulnerable. The role of politics is important here, since it can help the fringe to either stabilise or destabilise.

It is important to inquire, what it means to be a *Musahar* living on the fringe and to understand the terms under which they negotiate with the state and the civil society members across castes and class. This study also proposes to enquire into the illegal economic activities carried out in the slum impacting the socio-economic life of its residents which develops caste stereotyping. The following questions have emerged from the interaction with the residence of Samata Nagar on the basis of one and half month of field work.

1. How is a fringe formed in the city space? Charting the journey of the fringe from being in the periphery to the mainland of the city
2. What is the perception of those living on the fringes about their own "self" with relation to state, civil society and neighbourhood?
3. What are the strategies adopted by people living on the fringe to reproduce themselves?
4. How do they negotiate their existence bordering on the illegality?

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